

THE HOMES OF THE LEPCHAS

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horse or dog could eat the flesh of man, for all three are similar') 262
and such animals and vegetables as are considered poisonous.

Snakes are regarded with a certain amount of affect, though 825
on the whole with less than might be expected. To see a snake,
particularly the *pamol-beu* (a black non-poisonous snake) approach- [187]
ing you is a bad omen, and should it enter a house it foretells a death
in that house within the year. All dreams are meaningful, and
snakes in dreams have an ominous significance. Snakes do represent
a considerable danger, for they are fairly common, particularly in
the lower valley and in the forest, and cultivated land is always
surrounded by low scrub and secondary growth in which snakes can
and do hide. I was frequently asked for medicine against snake-bite,
particularly by hunters, but always as a preventative, for there were
no serious cases of snake-bite while I was there, nor did I hear of
any fatal ones. The Lepchas know of a dioecious plant which is [824]
believed to cure these bites, but apparently they have not much
faith in it. Snakes occur very little in mythology and fable, and [831] ●
have no overt phallic significance; the most common phallic symbol
is the maize cob, which is almost a rude word.

ii

Lingthem monastery is a two-storied rectangular building stand- 346
ing on an artificially levelled terrace about 5,500 feet above sea-level,
with its principal façade facing north. The first building on the
site was erected in 1855 but it has since been rebuilt three times. The
first building was made by Panloak, the grandfather of old Serving,
the last of his line to be head of the village; the first and second
renovations and enlargements were made under the direction of
learned lamas who had travelled from Tibet; the third and greatest
alteration was made fifteen years ago under the direction of, and to
a great extent at the expense of, the Muktair, the dead father of
Tafoor and Chudo. The rebuilding was done entirely by local
labour in the three winter months, with help from neighbouring
villages. The material was paid for chiefly by local subscription
helped by donations from the State and the British Political Officer
and the structure when completed was free from debt. The
monastery however still owes Rs. 600 to Lhasa for the copies of
the sacred books, and the heirs of the Muktair still owe money to
the money lenders for the sums the Muktair undertook personally
for the materials which had to be bought and for the big metal

614 situations inevitably lead to jealousy, fighting, and the splitting
 835 of the group. By their regulations the Lepchas have reduced
 intra-group aggression to the minimum. The potential rivalry
 between father and son is mitigated by taking the arrangements for
 the child's marriage entirely out of the parents' hands; the potential
 rivalry between brothers is mitigated by allowing the younger
 brother access to his more favoured and stronger elder brother's
 wife, while making the relationship between an elder brother and his
 younger sister-in-law strongly incestuous. In this connection it is
 [538] worth while noting that in the very large and elaborate Lepcha folk-
 lore and mythology I did not come upon a single instance of the
 otherwise almost universal compensatory story of the conflict
 between brothers, in which the despised, or ill-used younger brother
 or sister makes good after the elders have failed.

152 There is no specific word for 'jealousy' in Lepcha. When I
 presented hypothetical jealous situations to Lepchas and asked them
 what their feelings would be, the greater number say they would
 be angry; but this word, *sak-lyak*, does not carry very strong
 emotional connotations; it is the word used by parents if their
 children are naughty, or by workmen if they come across an un-
 expected difficulty in their work. It is also the most general euphem-
 [195] ism for a sexual erection; I cannot untangle the associations which
 have produced this metaphor, but there is no question that the word
 is used in both senses; more than once I have heard a workman say
 when, for example, cords have got tangled 'I am as angry as a
 standing penis.'

• [831] Despite the one-directioned sex-words, sexual
 activity is never openly equated with aggression; it is generally
 believed that both sexes enjoy it equally, though a few people
 maintained that women enjoy it more; almost all were agreed
 that women enjoy it later in life than men do. On the other hand
 [833] point may be given to the metaphor by the fact that during copula-
 tion only the man is active; the woman lies completely passive and
 relaxed.

152 The Lepchas of Zongu have dissipated nearly all the highly-
 831 charged emotional feelings which in many other societies are
 centred around sex, and on the whole neither sexual activity nor
 jealousy are strong motivating factors in their lives. There are
 a few exceptions to this generalisation; the quarrels fostered by the
 outsider, Mrs. Jiroong, have already been described in Chapter
 Three; and married women who show marked preference even for
 perfectly hereditary spouses, and married men who show preference

THE RULES OF KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE 163

for women other than their wives produce and have produced many disquieting situations, sometimes leading to open disputes and even suicide.¹⁰ Such disturbances can however be put down to uncontrollable personal temperaments, which go strongly against the Lepcha ideal of behaviour; the regulations of the Lepchas have been devised to reduce to a minimum the conflict and aggression within the group. This has not however been followed by added aggression to people outside the group; William Sumner's generalisation¹¹ does not hold good here, possibly because through the greater part of their history Lepchas have only had slight and intermittent contact with other groups. Practically all the aggression manifested by the Lepchas is directed against and is supposed to originate from hostile supernaturals. Historically Lepchas have nearly always answered outside aggression by retreating and hiding in the forest; and in the semi-historical stories which they recount about the invading Tibetans or Nepali or Bhutanese, the Lepchas get the better of their enemies, not by violence but by cunning—through cutting off the water supply, shooting fire into the fortress, blocking up mountain paths, and similar devices.

It is worth noting that the Lepchas who live in mixed communities, though they generally know of the theoretical right of access to potential spouses, all deny with great apparent sincerity that these rights are ever taken advantage of; many who have imbued the views of their neighbours the Tibetans or Nepali, regard them with horror. The Lepchas of Zongu themselves are culturally tolerant and know that their neighbours have different rules of conduct; for example the Tibetans forbid the marriage of aunt and nephew, but both they and the Nepali permit the marriage of first cousins which for the Lepchas is the most horrifying form of incest. The habits of other races, particularly the Tibetans, are a fairly constant subject of conversation; many of these habits are viewed with disgust, but disgust tempered by considerable amusement.

In the case of two or more marriages taking place within the same generation of two groups, the levirate and sororate claims are readjusted to meet the situation; for example if two brothers marry two sisters, the younger brother will not have the right of access to or be able to inherit his elder brother's wife, because she

¹⁰ Instances of these disruptive situations are given further on in this chapter and in Chapter Fifteen.

¹¹ 'The relation of comradeship and peace in the we-group and that of hostility and war towards others-groups are correlative of each other.' W. Sumner: *Folkways* (Boston 1906), p. 12.

152 in foreign surroundings; also his second wife came from a mixed
581 community. Katel and Aga on the other hand are both subnormal; they are foolish, suspicious and disliked.

152 For the Lepchas of Zongu sexual activity is practically divorced
581 from emotion; it is a pleasant and amusing experience, and as much a necessity as food and drink; and like food and drink it does not matter from whom you receive it, as long as you get it; though you are naturally grateful to the people who provide you with either regularly. One of the most difficult of all concepts for the European to take into consideration is the non-European attitude to sexual activity; with us, explicitly on the part of men, sexual desirability is most intimately bound up with aesthetic considerations. Although there may be individual disagreement as to who are included in the terms, potential sexual partners are divided into the categories of 'attractive' and 'unattractive'; and we believe that only perverts or prostitutes will have anything to do with the second category. Primitive people, I believe, do not make this distinction; there is social kudos to be acquired from being the known possessor of a beautiful wife or mistress; but for temporary sexual gratification any willing partner is equally acceptable. I found it extremely difficult to accept the notion that most of the men with young pretty wives at one time or another slept with the two sixty-year-old haridans who were the promiscuous women of Lingthem; but as far as I can make out their invitations were never refused.¹³ Fourteen-year-old Chimpet gave a good illus-

¹³ Professor Malinowski records a similar situation in the Trobriands in *The Sexual Life of Savages* (Routledge: London, 1929) page 247-8: 'The (medical officer) was once baffled by finding all the boys in a community afflicted with a very virulent and obviously recent gonorrhea, while all the women to be considered in this connection were as yet quite healthy. Finally he obtained a confession from one of his patients that he and his companions had copulated among others with a woman, so old, decrepit, and ugly, that the medical officer had thankfully and unhesitatingly omitted her in his several inspections. . . . 'I was able to ascertain that the ugliest and most repulsive people have, not only sporadic but regular intercourse.' Professor Malinowski finds this notion so repulsive that he accounts for it 'by their manner of carrying out this physiological activity', which in the Trobriands may entail very slight physical contact. This explanation does not however hold good for the Lepchas; see Chapter Twelve, p. 330. I think primitives dissociate, in a way we cannot, the public attitudes of parading a desirable partner, and the private ones of physiological gratification. In this connection it is perhaps worth noting that in the Somerset village where I live potentially jealous situations arise in the case of people whom I personally would consider, either through age or ugliness, to be almost sexless.

THE RULES OF KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE 171

tration of the cultural attitude to sex when he said that he had twice slept with a girl at Parfok, at her request, when he accompanied his father there to help perform religious ceremonies: he enjoyed the experience and would willingly repeat it; but he does not want to marry the girl because he does not like her. 152
831 ●

It is permissible for a man who feels himself unable to cope with his field-work, either on account of physical weakness or because he has other work which takes him a great deal from the neighbourhood, to invite an unmarried younger brother to live with him and to share his fields and wife. The co-husband is co-opted without any sort of ceremony, but thereafter he is no longer free in the choice of a wife of his own, if he desires one; he must make the request for a wife of the same *ptso* as the shared wife, exactly as if he was taking a second wife in the normal course of events. The co-husbands sleep with their common wife on alternate nights, but all the children are presumed to be begotten by the first husband, 595
[843] and he alone has to observe the pre-natal precautions; an exception is only made to this rule if the first husband's prolonged absence makes his paternity a physiological impossibility.

In the recent past there have only been two cases of such polyandry in Lingthem; one is that of Chala Mandal, described above, who first shared and then gave his first two wives to a 'younger brother'; the second is that of the second Dorjé Lapoon, who shared his wife with his real elder brother; this brother was a lama attached to another village who was almost always away, so that the second Dorjé Lapoon had almost the exclusive use of his shared wife. It is not allowable for two unrelated men to share a wife, but two who call themselves 'brothers' may do so; unless the two men are closely related this is considered undesirable, as it is liable to lead to quarrelling. There are some obvious advantages for a first husband in co-opting a second husband; it is an easy way to get rid of a wife of whom you are tired; it gives an extra adult worker and a care-taker for your property and wife when you have to be absent. The position of second co-husband on the other hand seems to offer few attractions except to the poor and unambitious, under-sexed man, and it is understandable that there are very few examples of such polyandry. In the event of polyandry or polygyny the incest prohibition against sleeping with your husband's younger brother, or your wife's elder sister, are obviously suspended. [835]

RELIGION II: THE MUN

233

afflicted household must touch the knots and then the Mun; then the Mun will call on all the devils to be contented with the blood of the sacrifice and not to take the patient, after which he throws the rope into the air; if the rope falls end outwards (i.e. the end away from the goat falls towards the door) it means the devils will be satisfied; if it falls towards the house the prognosis is bad. After this the animal is killed and the *gazook* and *sha-fot* offered to the devil with a plate and a pot filled with rice, a rupee and a ceremonial scarf, together with some of the invalid's ornaments and clothing (these last are only offered symbolically) and also a cup of *chi* with different grains in it. Then the Mun constructs a phallus out of wood, which is called in its guardian function *moong long tik*; this is set up between two stones leaning slightly forward, somewhere in the forest, and anointed with the blood of the slain animal and *chi*; this will keep the devil away, for no devil can pass this guardian. [831]

(2) To drive away the ghost of a dead child, called *Num-een moong*, which kills young children by infantile diarrhoea. After an animal has been sacrificed the person who is troubled by the *moong* goes down to a narrow stream; the troubled person stands on the right of the stream and the Mun on the left of it. Then a 'gateway' is made over the stream of two bundles of elephant grass and brambles; and the Mun holds in each hand a bundle made out of wild raspberries, nettles and all other thorny and prickly plants. These bundles are dipped in water and *pék* over the sufferer several times; then a bamboo *chi* holder filled with blood and *chi* and shut up at both ends, and a leaf filled with fried rice and meat and blood are *pék* over the patient and thrown through the gateway for the devil; then the bunches of thorny plants are thrown through the gateway and finally the gateway is filled up with thorny plants 'so that it looks like a tree'. The Mun does this at two other places some way apart on the stream; he must do these second two—one above and one below the original one—alone, and after completing them he must return straight to his own house without meeting anybody; should he meet people *Num-een moong* will start haunting them.

Num-een moong is the devil released by the death of young children under the age of about ten; this devil pursues living people and especially other children; older people who die do not let loose a devil. The *Num-een moong* persists for about three years after the child's death; when there are bad storms the devil can be heard hooting 'Oo-oo-oo.' Children are particularly

THE RHYTHM OF LEPCHA LIFE

259

seem, however, to drink quite as much as the others, for as a mark of affection they will take a drink out of the *patyoot* of anybody they like or anybody who invites them. As the drinking continues voices get louder and gestures more vehement and there is a great deal of laughter; most of this laughter arises from obscene remarks which may be *double entente* or may consist merely of the Lepcha monosyllables (they are actually bi-syllables). Occasionally some rather crude and childish practical joke may be played; big leaves or some other incongruous object may be tied on to a man's pigtail while he is not looking, or the skirt of his coat hitched up behind, but these jokes are comparatively rare; the one thing which seems to the Lepchas continually and inexhaustibly funny is sex. There is a certain amount of rough sexual by-play; a young man, or occasionally a young woman, will make a gesture of grabbing at another young man's private parts; this is considered extremely funny. The bolder young men will also try to fondle the breasts of the younger married women but they are usually repulsed extremely roughly; on the whole Lepcha women have rougher and brusquer gestures than the men and it is not uncommon for a woman who is being teased to give her teaser a resounding smack on the face; this is always taken in good part. It is also quite common for a youth to hang on to the back of an older man he is fond of, putting his hands over the older man's shoulder and touching his breasts; with this gesture the youths resume the position of a child being carried on its father's back. I do not think there is any conscious homosexual intention in this behaviour; it is noticeable that it is always the younger man who clings to the back of the older and never the reverse. A somewhat parallel type of behaviour is for oldish boys round about the age of ten or twelve to put their arms round a seated older woman whom they are fond of and apply their face to her dress over the breasts; this is the type of behaviour which is abandoned 'when boys are old enough to learn shame'.

The poorer Lepcha feasts finish at nightfall; if all the provisions are finished then people go home to sleep. But the better feasts continue far into the night, and some go on into the subsequent day; a really good feast, such as the Boom Koor, lasts for three days and three nights. People doze intermittently, wherever they happen to be, but on the whole little sleep is had; under such conditions the Lepchas seem to manage with very little rest, and I have seen people after forty-eight hours almost continuous eating and drinking go off, apparently quite fresh, to work in the fields.

- 527 fields. When feasts go on into the night, and especially at marriage feasts, couples may go away into the forest or to a neighbouring shed; this depends entirely on individual wish and opportunity, and sexual activity is not a necessary or even a particularly common concomitant to a feast; on the other hand sexual conversation and [522] jokes are inevitable and continuous, and in some of the longer feasts practical jokes with a sexual tinge are played: young women set on an old man, strip him naked and chase him round the monastery, and so on; it is nearly always the older men who are made the butts of such pleasantries.

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522 One of the things which most surprised me about the Lepchas
 831 was this constant verbal preoccupation with sex. Whenever a group of men and women were gathered together for any purpose, however solemn or important, every possible remark was given sexual significance. On the whole when there were only members of one sex present, except sometimes among the younger men, or when there were only three or four people present, the conversation was not so indecent, but in mixed groups it was practically continuously so, and each sally was greeted with as hearty laughter as if an entirely novel joke had been made. A certain amount of ingenuity was shown in giving apparently ordinary phrases a sexual meaning (almost any transitive verb could be twisted into a periphrasis for copulation) but apart from this the theme was not embroidered in any way; simply every possible opportunity was seized for mentioning the primary sexual characteristics and copulation.

522 It is difficult, especially with the English taboos on the anglo-
 831 saxon monosyllables, to give any illustrations of these jokes. But the following verbal transcription of an extremely solemn occasion may give some idea of the sort of pleasantries which are the constant accompaniment to Lepcha work and feasts. As has already been described^a Chala Mandal went to a great deal of expense and trouble [755] to summon from a distant village an old and widely-famed Mun in order to appease the spirit of his first dead wife, so that his lumbago might be cured and he might beget a son. This occasion was for the Mandal, for his two wives, and for the dozen or more other people present one of very great importance. This is the conversation which took place when the Mun was already in the position

^a See Chapter Eight, p. 231.

THE RHYTHM OF LEPCHA LIFE

261

where he was going to pray: the table with the cup filled with strained *chi* and the incense burner already lit was in front of him; the Mandal was seated beside him, with his wives opposite; everything was ready for the ceremony to begin. Before praying the Mun made an, as it were, introductory speech, addressed partly to the Mandal, and partly to the other people present.

The Mun: I'm a very old man, and I found the journey very trying indeed; I was tired and felt I'd like to rest, and — a girl. I'm really a very old man now; but since you're the Mandal, and this is your house I shall do what I can. When you first sent a messenger with a load of *chi* I said 'No, I cannot go'. But you sent twice and three times and I couldn't resist you. It is true that in rank as Mandal you are above me; but in age you could be my grandson. Just as a small girl is frightened when she sees a big penis and runs away, or as a little boy is frightened when he sees a big vulva, so am I frightened of you. Nevertheless I shall do what I can. I am very sorry for you because although you have had four wives you have got no son. I think this is a source of great worry to you, but what can be done? It is not your fault; you have treated your wives well. It is not a bad deed but misfortune which makes you childless. Were I to say I could do nothing for you, you would be disappointed; shall I do this ceremony and nothing result I shall be ashamed. Nevertheless I will do what I can. You—his wives—you are my sisters and daughters: tell me, my daughters, does this husband of yours treat you badly?

The Mandal: My parents-in-law are very strict with me, and were I to do so they would punish me.

Tafoor: And then you'd take it out of your wives—or put it in—very roughly. (*General laughter*)

The Mandal (while the Mun smears butter on the cup): When I was ill it was discovered that Sabdok *moonig* was troubling me, and Hit *rum* was angry, so I sent for you, because you are an old and experienced man. So please be so kind as to sacrifice properly, so that I may be troubled no longer. Please do so, whether my body is cured thereby or not.

The Mun: Were you to die, what would happen to your wives and daughter—women who are all alone?

The Mandal: Don't worry about that; in that case they can go home.

The Mun: I have already said that I am old and weak; if my sacrifice is unsuccessful, don't blame me. I take all you here to

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522 witness what I have said. (To Ashyok who had fetched him):
 831 If I fail in this I'll never dare look at you again. The Mun then
 842 began to pray in a loud and clear voice, and the rest listened quietly
 [781] and almost reverently—an unparalleled situation in my experience
 of Lepchas. The Mun first mentioned the Mandal's year of birth
 and *ptso* and then summoned *Sabdok moong* and *Hit rum* to deliver
 him, and then called on the gods collectively to give the Mandal
 a son. 'Why is it,' he asked the gods, 'when he has two wives,
 and there are lots of other girls going about with gaping vulvas;
 that he has no son?' (*General laughter*) He then sprinkled the
chi and said to the supernaturals 'Now I am only doing this small
 ceremony; when I return to my own home the day after to-morrow
 I shall repeat the ceremony better.' He then announced in his
 normal voice that he had done all he could and called on Gongyop
 to take over from him and finish the ceremony.

This ceremony was, I repeat, the most solemn that I witnessed
 in Lingthem, and the sexual jokes were therefore comparatively
 rare; also there were no direct invitations or solicitations, such as
 would occur in more convivial circumstances.

184 I found this continual harping on the humorous aspects of
 522 sexual physiology puzzling, since most Lepchas have a full and
 831 adequate sex life, and face sex extremely simply, without
 guilt or secrecy; but the town Lepchas found it extremely
 shocking, for the Lepchas of Zongu would make such remarks
 before their parents or children; a man would not direct such
 remarks to his mother-in-law or daughter-in-law, or *vice versa*,
 but he is not very careful as to whether these people are in ear-shot
 or not. On the grounds of this openness of speech the town Lepchas
 called the Lepchas of Zongu uncivilised and shameless. I think it
 is legitimate to call such remarks obscene, since they are avoided
 in front of relations-in-law and would cause shame if for example
 they were uttered by a third person in the presence of a son-in-law
 and mother-in-law, and since the three operative words are always
 referred to in circumlocutions before a superior. They are certainly
 relished as obscenities.

522 I think one of the reasons for this constant verbal preoccupation
 831 with the comic aspects of sex is the fact that at any village gathering,
 or feast the great majority of the people present are, owing to the
 stringent incest laws, forbidden sexual partners; there is a release
 from tension in thus jesting about these dangerous subjects, although
 even in jest direct invitations are not made to people who

THE RHYTHM OF LEPCHA LIFE

263

would count as incestuous. Another reason is the cultural concept⁵²² that there is no temperamental difference between men and³³¹ women; except that men are usually stronger physically identical⁵⁶² standards of behaviour are expected from both sexes; the standards of beauty are identical; except that they may not kill animals nor perform lamaist ceremonies nor own land women suffer under no disability because they are women. With this general conception of the similarity of the two sexes the differences of appearance and function of the primary sexual characteristics becomes even more striking and worthy of comment; and it is worth noting again in this context the extraordinary amount of fantasy about the independent life of the genitalia which occurs in the Lepcha stories. It is also possible that in removing all intense emotion from sexual activity the Lepchas have also destroyed some of the emotional release and psychological satisfaction.

Some of the young men were particularly given to obscenity, particularly Tobgé, a ne'er-do-well whose wife, it will be remembered, was carrying on with Dadool, and Chudo, Tafoor's younger brother. Chudo was twenty-nine, the father of three children, and very fond of his wife. He always gave the impression of being very much younger than his years; he was particularly sweet-tempered, even for a Lepcha, and very industrious, but he was extremely childish, perhaps because his elder brother, Tafoor, was so very learned and responsible. He had rather a grotesque sense of humour and was very fond of imitating lamaist dances, almost parodying them, and of making surprising jokes and unexpected little presents. When he learned I was fond of flowers he used to bring me nearly every day some orchid or other odd flower that he had found in his work travelling about the country-side. If the younger men were more inclined to obscenity so were the elder women, particularly Lumba's first wife, a Mun aged forty-seven, who was completely outrageous and shameless in her speech and behaviour; she was a jolly bawdy old creature, rather in the tradition of Marie Lloyd. As far as my information goes, and on such matters it is very extensive, she was relatively chaste in her private life; nobody repeated any scandal about her. When I talked to women about sex and childbirth and similar subjects the older ones used always to answer quite freely; but occasionally if there was a young woman in the group, she would ask why I talked about such things which made her feel ashamed; if this happened the older women would usually stop the conversation, giving

HIMALAYAN VILLAGE

831 the impression that they had been caught out in a breach of formal
522 manners to which sensible people did not pay any attention.

834 Young unmarried girls did not on the whole join in these jokes,
522 though they might laugh at them; boys started making them at
about the age of fourteen. Girls and young women were very careful about exposing their bodies and often a great deal of fuss went on if a father or husband brought up a girl to have sores on her leg dressed; I think some of the women did feel genuinely distressed at having a stranger touch their legs before witnesses. Grown men were also fairly modest before me, but the younger men and boys were not; if they had torn pants or no pants, and thereby exposed themselves, this was a cause for laughter rather than confusion. On occasion, especially when we first arrived, women would reproach young children for showing their nakedness; this was always done very quietly and in a calm voice without emotion; the warning was often observed for quite two minutes after the woman had spoken. Excessive modesty of speech or action is a great part of the pattern of respectful behaviour, and is enjoined towards parents-in-law and social superiors; except in these situations it is considered a juvenile trait which people grow out of; it is usually given as the chief reason for the difficulty of establishing the marriage of young people on a firm basis. It is a legitimate subject for teasing; and one of the permanent jokes of the younger men was to push the more modest women into my arms, or to tell them that if they wanted really good medicine they should come and visit me late in the evening. A few of the girls seemed really distressed at this behaviour and all attempted to appear bashful; but with many the pretence was not successful.

iv

191 Speech has very great importance for the Lepchas. Indeed,
537 apart from such knowledge as is necessary for the priests of the different religions, it may be said to represent their art, their science, and their intellectual entertainment. To be able to speak well is after being able to work well the highest social commendation. A good speaker is always in demand, and is essential on formal occasions, such as the entertainment of a stranger, or as *bek-bu* in marriage transactions.

195 There are two kinds of excellency in speech; first there is the
537 person with an elegant vocabulary, and second the person with a

CHAPTER ELEVEN

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

842 According to Lepcha theory a child's life starts at the moment of
 843 conception. When the two secretions mingle¹ the soul arrives
 from heaven or the place of the gods (the first being the lamaist, the
 second the Mun, repository of unborn people); the father's semen
 provides the bones and brain, the mother's vaginal secretions the
 343 flesh and blood. The first portion of the foetus to be formed is the
 eyes, which are completed at the end of the first month; then from
 round the eyes the head develops and then the rest of the body
 downwards. The foetus is completely human with all its organs,
 and even its hair, at the end of the fifth month.

Within the womb is something resembling a nipple through
 which the child draws nourishment; this nourishment is something
 like butter, and is the transmuted food of the mother, just as milk
 is after birth. Consequently the mother is not permanently depleted
 by child-bearing; none of her body has gone to feed the child.

842 Conception is shown by the cessation of the menses, which were
 instituted for that purpose. The child does not feed on the menstrual
 blood; menstruation is exclusively a calendar.

843 At the fifth month when the baby is considered fully formed the
 expectant parents must start observing the numerous pre-natal
 precautions which have to be followed if the child is not to be born
 malformed, or if the mother is not to have a difficult delivery.
 The entering into this period of pre-natal precautions is established
 by a Mun *pék-ing* both parents with a bunch of elephant grass in
 one hand and a live fowl in the other. Both parents are equally
 capable of influencing the child within the womb, and in point of
 fact the greater number of the precautions to be observed are
 concerned with work which is liable to fall to a man rather than a
 843 woman. Copulation after conception has no influence on the foetus,
 833 except incestuously, which would produce a miscarriage, and may

[83] ¹ The Lepchas consider semen and the vaginal secretions to be parallel
 substances; they are called penis-water and vagina-water.

SEX, MARRIAGE AND MATURITY

329

The Lepchas have not elaborated seduction in any way, and the verbal intricacies which are employed on formal occasions are not used for it. In most cases the man usually asks the girl in so many words if he may sleep with her; if she refuses at first there may be a little pleading and persuasion; but, except when they are very young, girls do not appear usually to refuse. Courtship barely exists among the Lepchas and no preliminary stimulations in the way of kisses or embraces are employed, though a man may fondle a woman's breasts immediately before copulation; fondling of the breasts in public is considered slightly shameless but rather funny; it is the equivalent to a direct invitation. Sexual desire is not believed to need any provocation; nakedness is not considered in any way exciting or stimulating; one or two men said they were excited at the sight of a woman's naked thighs; but for the majority immediate anticipation is the only stimulant. Neither sex indulges in any obvious exhibitionism when sober (men, especially older men, sometimes uncover their genitals when drunk) nor in any special coquetry. 832

There is no overt jealousy on the part of fathers or brothers towards the lovers of their sisters or daughters; and it is considered that men have no call to interfere in the sexual life of their female blood-relations unless an unmarried girl produces a bastard. Fathers will generally warn their daughters to be circumspect on this account when they think they have reached an age when this becomes possible; but it was agreed that unless a girl were pregnant a father would have no justification in being angry with her or the man if he discovered his daughter with a lover. 835

Except in the case of recent adultery sexual success is not made a secret of and a successful lover will almost certainly inform his friends. Adultery which is past and finished and pre-nuptial copulation with married people is a subject for open jest and teasing. One day Chudo explained in great detail how and when he had slept with Mrs. Jiroong when they were both unmarried, in the presence of Mrs. Jiroong and a number of other Lepchas. She showed her resentment by throwing a bunch of leaves at him, but forgot even to appear embarrassed. 831●

The casual encounter in the field or forest has a somewhat more romantic aura; but it is considered altogether preferable that love-making should take place indoors because of the greater time it allows the pair. In their youth and young manhood (the period Lepchas call *fleng*) Lepcha men would appear to be remarkably 833

833 potent; trustworthy people said that when they were first married they would copulate with their wives five or six, and even eight or nine times in the course of the night, though they would then be tired the next day. I have got no comparable information from women but such statements were often made in mixed company without the women present making any comment or in any way expressing incredulity. This potency diminishes around the age of thirty, but copulation once nightly is still the general rule for married couples. Tafoor claimed that in his youth he was almost indefatigable, but says that now he only sleeps with his wife once every three or four nights; this is the reason why he is relatively fat, for chastity induces fatness. It is believed that people accustomed to regular copulation will feel extremely uncomfortable for the first few days if for any reason their partner is removed; but it is considered that people over thirty should be able to support long periods of chastity (with the exception, some laymen say, of the lamas, who cannot do without sex even for a week).

The normal position for Lepchas copulating is for the woman to lie absolutely prone and relaxed, while the man kneels in front of her between her legs. In situations where discretion is necessary both parties lie on their sides, copulation taking place *a retro*; and in some sudden and quick encounters both parties remain standing, the woman leaning against a tree or wall. During copulation the woman lies completely motionless and relaxed, but this passivity is not equated with non-participation, and the orgasms of both

831 sexes are considered identical in nature. The Lepcha attitude to semen is practically the same as that commonly held in Europe; it is thought to be a secretion which is constantly produced and stored against use, so that a husband who has been for some while separated from his wife will have particularly large reserves. The testicles are regarded as the reservoirs of semen; they are not paid much attention to in conversation and have little rôle in the constant flow of sexual jokes. It is believed that if a man's testicles hang lower than his penis he is more likely to be fertile than if the contrary is the case. Semen is considered to be a rather unpleasant and soiling substance, and these characteristics are advanced as one of the major reasons against masturbation. Lepcha men consider that copulation is most enjoyable either with a very young girl or with a woman who has borne more than one child; in the latter case there is the added advantage that copulation is thought to be much less exhausting. Men with large penises are considered to give

SEX, MARRIAGE AND MATURITY

331

Men with large penises are considered to give women more immediate satisfaction, but to be on the whole less fertile; there are, however, some anecdotes told of mothers procuring large-penised lovers to impregnate their daughters when their husbands have been unable to do so. The size and shape of the genitals of the men in the neighbourhood is a common subject for conversation; and such exact anatomical details are known and described that it would seem as though the privacy and secrecy enjoyed after the fire is damped down were by no means absolute.

A couple of Tibetan prostitutes live at Mangan on the other side of the Teesta River to cater for the transitory Tibetan muleteers. A couple of the Lepchas of Lingthem have made use of their services for the fee of one rupee. Kurma said he preferred these women because, in contrast to Lepcha women, they were energetic during the act. The hiring of these women constitutes a display of superfluous wealth and an act of dare-devilry; the Lepchas consider their presence as one of the comic curiosities of the neighbourhood, but think it rather absurd for anybody to pay for sexual intercourse.

It is considered by most Lepchas extremely dangerous to sleep with a menstruating woman; Chala Mandal said that he personally would not be afraid, but the general belief is that the man who does so will be unwell and doltish afterwards for a period that some men put at a week and others at three years. It is a general belief that women are particularly desirous directly after menstruation and a few consider that impregnation is most likely to take place at that time. Old Hlatam the 'poisoner' has even gone so far as to warn her daughters to be particularly careful of that period so as to avoid bastards; but this belief is by no means generally held, and it would seem to be an importation from the Nepali, who, Major Morris says, have turned this belief into a cultural act of faith. During their actual periods girls will tell their lovers that they are unwell, but the great majority pay no attention to the subsequent days. There is also a vague belief that it is possible to foretell conception if the man is especially tired and the woman especially passionate.

Although sexual enjoyment is believed to continue for both sexes up to an advanced old age, the sexual activities of old people are considered rather ludicrous. One of Chudo's most successful and appreciated jokes was his vivid description of the noises he heard nightly coming from the sleeping place of his sixty-nine-year-old 'grandfather' the second Dorjé Lapoon and his seventy-four-year-old bride Pumri; and the first Dorjé Lapoon's attempts at eighty-

831 two to *asék* a woman of forty were also considered funny. These
522 two old stalwarts were, however, somewhat exceptional; most
Lepchas after the age of seventy abandon all such thoughts and
actions. I question whether the generally expressed fear of surviving
one's strength into extreme old age is in any way consciously
connected with the fear of losing potency.

831 The Lepchas' attitude towards sex is extremely forth-right and
unemotional. They openly equate sexual activity with eating,
saying that the one is as natural and as necessary as the other; and
they tend to treat both activities as of about equal emotional
importance. Sexual activity, unless it forms part of a larger pattern
of give-and-take, sets up no social obligations between the two
parties; neither is considered to be indebted or especially benefited,
and copulation entails no further duties. The Lepcha attitude to a
transitory sexual partner is summed up in the Edwardian smoking-
room joke: 'Since when does sleeping together constitute a social
introduction?' The Lepchas are much occupied with sex; it is
the subject of much of their conversation and nearly all their
humour; it is regarded as almost as essential as food. Sex is
intended to be exclusively sensual and almost impersonal; the
culture makes no allowance for deep personal relationships passion-
ately adhered to between sexual partners. If sex becomes emotion-
ally serious it is always a nuisance and, if either of the partners are
betrothed or married, it may be disastrous.

iii

585 The majority of marriages take place in the autumn months after
[587] the harvest is gathered; a few, however, take place at other periods,
particularly second marriages, which are usually celebrated an
exact calendar year after the death of the first spouse. It is necessary
to find an auspicious day for the marriage, taking into consideration
[787] the birth years of the two contracting parties. Should a relation
on either side die on the marriage day it is a bad omen, and signifies
either the sterility or early death of the wife.

The groom's family usually spend several months before the
date fixed in collecting the necessary food and animals. Just before
the marriage date (the number of days before depends on the journey
necessary) the groom goes with his *bek-bu* to his bride's house taking
with him the hind leg of a pig, a scarf and a rupee as a present for
his mother-in-law. On his arrival the sisters and other girl friends

DEATH

353

death in the same household. After this a young boy takes some firebrands from the hearth some way away from the house; then the goat is led to the same place, stabbed to death and singed. After this the crops on the tray are *pék* over the inhabitants of the house and set down by the goat. Then the Mun takes the bundles of leaves already prepared in his right hand and a live hen in his left and *péks* the members of the household. The hen is then given to some neighbour to kill and eat; for neither the Mun nor any members of the household may eat anything used in this sacrifice. Then the intestines of the goat are cooked and mixed with rice; the Mun throws *chi* from a buttered cup to the devils, his assistant the chopped meat and rice.

When this is finished a wooden phallus (*siklyong-kup*) is set up between two stones on the way to the house; it is given hundreds of small cuts, each cut representing one year that the devil cannot pass. It is anointed with blood and *chi*. All that night the Mun communes—*munthen*—but he does not go into a trance. No food is given to the soul of a child. If the child was young he did not eat in real life and even if he did eat solid food, he was fed in his life time.

iv

As has been said earlier, except for the expulsion of *Sandé moong* all these ceremonies are performed several days, or weeks, after the removal of the corpse. If it is possible, however, immediately after the corpse has been disposed of the *sanglion*—the speeding of the soul—is performed. Occasionally it is necessary to wait a few days while the requisite animals and food and materials which are involved are collected, for the *sanglion* is a very expensive ceremony. At this ceremony the mourners should not eat any of the meat provided, but should give it all away. The same term, *sanglion*, is used both for the lama's and the Mun's ceremonies and if both are performed they take place simultaneously; for lamas and nuns the Mun ceremony is not performed and for laymen the lama ceremony is much abbreviated. Another controlling detail as to the date when the *sanglion* is performed is the time necessary to prepare a sufficiency of *chi*.

The lama ceremony is as follows. First of all an image of the dead person is constructed in the following way: on a mat is drawn a circle of about ten inches across of powdered grain, with nine

159 April 7th.

I felt unwell this day and did not go out but I did not tell other people about it.

April 8th.

Kurma came up in the morning and told me before we had spoken about anything that he had dreamt that I should be ill.¹⁸ He said that he had got rid of his heart ache by making a small offering of butter and rice instead of the proper big offering. Today I asked him to tell me more about his early life, which he had sketched out a couple of days earlier, and he talked practically the whole day without interruption. He went into the most minute details of his sexual activities and physical make-up. He obviously fancies himself very much as a lover.

April 10th.

Kurma talked about a great variety of subjects, chiefly institutionalised customs. He said that according to his standard only two people in the village could be called rich—the Mandal and Takneum *youni*. He said that he himself was as rich as Jiroong (as a matter of fact this is untrue), but he counts himself a poor man. He also told part of the stories of the first Dorjé Lapoon and Jiroong.¹⁹

April 16th.

Kurma was occupied from the 16th till the 19th with the business of arranging the repairing of the bamboo bridge which joins Lingthem and Liklyang. He had to get the workers and also the materials and supervise the work which was being performed. He was very busy and officious and seemed to be enjoying himself but complained of the work which prevented him working on his own fields.

April 24th.

Kurma came up again and I chiefly talked to him about the facts which I had learnt since his last visit of general importance, seeking to get confirmation of them. Among the other subjects was the question of the money lenders and indebtedness; Kurma told the history of his own debt (given in Chapter Four). On this subject

¹⁸ Dream given in Chapter Seven, p. 186.

¹⁹ See Chapter Sixteen.

159visiting her brother, who had left his home and settled in
587Lingtem. She was not too old, unmarried, and not un-
comely. Jiroong started to visit her; and soon decided that
she was the one girl who could change his life: she was. He
worked hard in his fields; and before long had saved enough
money to buy the necessary pig. Tempa was willing to let his
sister go; and so the two were married. They now have two
children of their own; but life is not all roses. Mrs. Jiroong,
it appears, is fond of the bottle; and when she indulges
displays an uncontrollable temper. Although he is now a
senior Lama, Jiroong has to submit to the indignity of
[837]finding his wife debarred from entering the monastery. This
he could bear; but unfortunately his wife cares nothing for
monogamy. He could bear this too, if only she would
entertain her friends in private.

159 When Jiroong married again the Dorje-Lopön and his
latest wife decided to set up house on their own. She died a
few years later and he now lives alone with his only other
child, a boy of eighteen, whose mother was the fourth wife.
Although still titular head of the monastery the old man finds
it hard to make ends meet. He was rich at one time, but his
money, and that of his son, has mostly gone in smoothing out
his matrimonial tangles. At eighty-two he is looking for a
● [831]sixth wife; but the girls in Lingtem, like the widow who
married Tristram Shandy's Uncle Toby, are somewhat
doubtful of his ability to please them.

* * * * *

[837] The second Dorje-Lopön is sixty-nine, and entered into
matrimony for the first time only a year ago, when he
married an elderly Mun, Pom-ri, on the death of her
husband; but the pair had been lovers for forty years. The
Dorje-Lopön always called himself a celibate; but this is
what actually happened: While he was still a boy, his elder
159 brother was married, but shortly after left for Gangtok,
595 leaving his wife at home. The Dorje-Lopön would in any
case have had the right to cohabit with her; but in this

THE PEOPLE

89

the change has been effected nothing can be done to alter it back. ¹⁵⁹ ₈₄₂

Chodu, more than any other Lepcha I have ever met, conformed in appearance with the popular conception of these people as "Elves of the forest"; but actually his gnome-like appearance was somewhat deceptive. He was so pre-occupied with sex, more even than the average Lepcha, that we had already christened him "the dirty Reverend" before we knew his proper name; and under this title he appears in all my notes. When he found that we were fond of flowers he used often to bring in great armfuls of purple *Dendrobium* orchids, flowers that in England would have cost at least a shilling for a single bloom; and on these occasions our otherwise severely simple living-room would assume the appearance of a popular actress's dressing-room. His duties as a Ka-Ne brought him almost daily to the monastery, when he would come tiptoeing into the bedroom to change the water on the altar. A very likeable person and full of fun. ¹³⁷ ₁₅₇

* * * * *

The Chôteмбу, who was otherwise known as Lumbar, was fifty-two. Grey-haired and jolly, his rather peculiar goitre gave the impression of a roll of fat all round his neck. His origin was somewhat obscure, for he appears to have been what our interpreter described as the "blasted son" of a Tibetan. He can neither read nor write, and says he has never exercised his prerogative to beat his fellows. His first wife, now forty-seven, is a daughter of Pom-Ri, now the wife of the second Dorje Lopön. After ten years of married life his wife, since she had borne him no child, urged him to marry again; this he did, and although his second wife has given him two children he still remains faithful to the first. The two women live in separate houses, but there is no question of their not getting on together. The first lives alone in a cattle-shed because she likes to get away by herself at times, and finds it irksome to be always in a house full of people and noise. Chôteмбу divides his time between the ¹⁵⁹ ₁₆₄ ₂₁₂ ₅₉₅

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5
Nepal AK1

FAMILY LIFE

171 L
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and it is worth noting that their houses contain no such ventilation. They are, moreover, in the habit of stopping up every crevice and crack with rags or paper, and in addition sleep with their heads completely covered, neither of which does the Lepcha do. The Lepcha house, moreover, has a wooden floor, through the joints of which, since the house is raised off the ground, air can also enter. The Nepali house, on the contrary, is built flush with the ground and has a floor of rammed earth smeared over with a mixture of mud and cow-dung; this last for ceremonial cleanliness.

24th March:

We went this morning to watch a house being re-roofed. It belonged to Pemba, Pichi's Lama brother. When we arrived at about nine o'clock some twenty men, including a number of Lamas, were already putting on new rafters. Only two women were present: Pemba's wife and mother; but others will turn up later, to help in the actual thatching. No payment is made to the helpers; but in addition to being fed while they are working they are given a feast on the conclusion of the work.

Women started to arrive about ten o'clock, and at once started to light fires and prepare the gargantuan meal which seems to be the usual complement of such occasions. Everyone appeared to be completely sober (an unusual state of affairs); but as soon as the women arrived sex was, as usual, the chief topic of conversation. Whenever a woman came anywhere near she would invariably be greeted with some obscene remark, at which all the others would laugh. The greatest joke seemed to be to induce the girls to go up on to the roof, so that men working below could pass personal remarks on such parts of their anatomy as were visible. I must say, however, that the girls seemed ready to play. At one time Pemba's mother, a most efficient and able woman, told the workers to press the thatch well down. "You come up here and we'll press things down all right," somebody shouted. This remark, to which she took not the slightest exception,

LIVING WITH LEPCHAS

521 172

522 was greeted with much giggling laughter, which seems to be
 831 reserved exclusively for this type of joke.

355 I was told that there was no one in charge of the work, and certainly did not hear anyone giving any sort of order. In spite of this, however, there was no fuss or bother; everyone seemed to know exactly what to do.

314 The material for roofing this house had been gradually
 356 collected during the past three months. We noticed one old
 655 man sitting apart, about a hundred yards away up the hill. He was preparing the canes for making the ties. We wondered why he was all alone. "So as not to attract the notice of any government official who might pass this way," he said. This appeared a most unlikely contingency, unless he thought we were spies; but since cane is a forest product, and therefore the property of the State, it should not rightfully be used without permission. This prohibition also applies of

[313] course to firewood; but in that case appears to be disregarded.

342 The thatch, by means of two overlaps, is of three thick-
 313 nesses. It is not fixed to the rafters but is roughly kept in place with a long stick tied right across it. It is made from a special kind of bamboo only found high up in the forest. This is cut into four-foot lengths, split, soaked in water, and bent double while still green. It is placed on the roof with the inner surface outside, so that the rain is carried off the roof by what is, to all intents and purposes, a series of open bamboo drains.

356 As soon as the rafters and cross-pieces had been prepared the women joined in the work, the heavy bundles of thatch being first carried up to the attic by men. Pemba's father took no part and spent most of his time repairing a hedge round the house, in which he was assisted by his youngest son. The whole roof had been stripped off before we arrived; but one small corner had been left, as protection in case the new roof was not completed by nightfall.

778 I noticed that a bullock's horn had been fastened over the door. This is known as *Gusung*, and is meant to frighten devils. There is no ceremony in connection with its use; but

597 A childless couple nearly always adopt a child, usually that of some near relation. It often happens that a woman gives birth to a child of her own a few years after she and her husband have already adopted one. An adopted son is better than none; but there is no doubt that the practice is to a great extent resorted to in the hope of getting a child of one's own. This belief is so common that even among Lepcha Christians in the Gangtok district (so Miss Scott tells me) it is common for people to adopt a child temporarily, on the understanding that it is returned to its parents as soon as the adopting mother gives birth to a child of her own. In Jongu, however, the adopted child [428] does not normally return to its own parents and remains the legal heir of its adopting father, even should he later have a son of his own.

883 Of adolescence there is little to be said except that it does
 ● 831 not seem to result in psychological disturbance such as is common in our society. But there is, of course, here no [521] sexual repression at any time of life. Sex is, indeed, almost the people's sole recreation, and the most common topic of conversation on practically every occasion. This state of affairs is more commonly associated with a society such as our own, in which sexual experience is, to a great extent, denied to the young. One would not expect to find it in a primitive culture in which at no time is there the slightest difficulty in indulging in sex to the body's content. It should [212] be realised, however, that the Lepchas have no mental
 539 occupation whatsoever. They do not read; they do not even dance, except on rare ceremonial occasions, and once the day's work in the fields is done there is only drinking and sex. Whether this is or is not a desirable state of affairs I leave it to the reader to judge; but at least the people are free from the evils which undoubtedly result from the unfulfilled desires aroused by the erotic stimulation of the cinema and such-like shows.

562 Marriage usually takes place between the ages of fifteen
 584 and twenty, and is generally arranged by the parents of the

FAMILY LIFE

221

boy and girl concerned. The children are, however, con-582
 sulted and are never forced to marry against their will; but at 584
 this age they do not seem to have any very strong likes or
 dislikes, and seem usually willing to marry anyone whom
 their parents suggest. I do not think the question of love ever 637 ●
 arises, and am personally doubtful whether such a state of
 mind is known to the Lepcha; but the reasons for this will be
 more fully discussed in the following chapter. There is a 584
 tendency, however, for boys who go away from home to work
 to insist on choosing their own partners, and to delay their
 marriage until a somewhat later age than the normal. There
 are, of course, not many such; but under the feudal system 642
 prevailing each village has, according to the size of its 874
 population, to provide a boy or two either for service in the
 Palace at Gangtok or for training in the State Carpentry
 School. These boys are usually away from home between,
 roughly, the ages of twelve and twenty, but some prefer to
 stay on. They seem to find it a little difficult to fit into the 54
 scheme of village life when they first return, but in Lingtem
 there was no apparent case of a boy being permanently
 maladjusted on this account. They settle down quite
 comfortably after the first few months and are probably
 better, in the long run, for the additional experience. Most of
 them learn to speak Nepali, and one or two can read and 111
 write a little. The system has much to commend it, and 574
 enables the Maharaja to keep in personal touch with his
 tenants. This would otherwise be impossible, since a personal
 visit to Jongu, Lepcha hospitality being what it is, would be
 too much of a drain on the district's resources. This His
 Highness fully realises, and wisely keeps away.

[p. 222 is blank]

own. The child gets its bone from the father's semen, and its⁸⁴³ flesh from the mother's vaginal secretions. The food eaten by the mother causes the foetus to grow; but once the baby is completely formed inside the womb it feeds on its mother's menstrual blood, which explains why the menses cease during pregnancy.

It is generally believed that a girl has her first menses⁸⁸¹ about one month after she copulates for the first time, even though she be only nine or ten years old. Nothing is done or said at such a time; nor on any later occasion is any kind of special clothing or bandage worn. This is the origin of menstruation:

In olden times menstruation was confined to men, who⁷⁷³ used to bleed from the knees. In view of their normal⁵³⁹ occupations, working in the fields, hunting, and so on, this⁸⁴¹ was very inconvenient, since the blood dripped all over the place. Nazong Nyu noticed this and wondered what he could do to remedy it.

Now in those days the female genitalia were situated in the middle of the forehead. Nazong thought this did not look very nice and decided to change the position. He summoned some bulbuls and told them to peck out the women's parts and replant them in their chins. This they did; but after a time Nazong still did not think the general effect was very pleasing. He summoned the birds again and told them to move the parts to the women's chests; but still he was not satisfied. Finally he had them moved to the place where they now are; and seeing that they were suitably hidden beneath the women's clothing he decided that it would be more convenient if women menstruated instead of men. As a result of this arrangement the women started to bleed periodically from that very day, and the bulbul still has a blood-red spot on its tail: this it acquired when it was carrying out Nazong Nyu's orders.

One day when I was talking to Karma we were all⁸²¹ laughing rather loudly at some remark when there was a⁸³¹

82| sudden burst of thunder, not an unusual occurrence in

83| Lingtem. This would at first sight appear to have no connection with the subject of sex; but actually it has. It is considered at all times dangerous to laugh when there is thunder about, but this is the story Karma told me:

82| "Once, when I was a small boy, I went on a visit to Gangtok. I had been down to the bazaar and was sitting talking to some Nepalis in the shop of a betel-nut seller. There was a small lizard running up and down the wall at the time and one of the men laughed and spat a jet of red *pan* juice at it. It remained without moving, merely blinking its eyes in the peculiar quick manner that lizards have: it then ate some of the spittle. Immediately after it suddenly grew quite dark and still; and then there was a terrific crash of thunder followed by the most vivid streak of lightning I have ever seen. We were all thrown to the ground, and several of the men were so badly injured that they had to be taken to hospital; but I myself was only a little dazed. There is no doubt that the lizard caused this sudden burst of thunder and called it down on the men as a punishment for laughing at it.

82| "Incidentally, there are certain men who involuntarily
83| cause sudden thunder if anyone laughs on beholding their private parts. There are not many such; and in fact there is no one living in Lingtem at the moment who possesses this peculiar quality.

"I well remember when the present monastery was being built: there was a boy from a neighbouring village who was helping to carry up stones from the river. Babu was his name. The work was very heavy, and since it was a hot and sultry day the men had discarded most of their clothing. On the way up the hill Babu's trousers slipped down, so that his penis was exposed. All the women started to laugh and to make remarks about his person. Almost at once the sky grew dark and then there was a terrific burst of thunder, followed by lightning. Babu ran off towards Jiroong's house, which was nearby. As he did so we saw the lightning appear

to enter the ground where the monastery staircase now is; ⁸²¹ but before it actually touched the ground it appeared to jink ⁸³¹ away to one side, and a large thunderbolt fell at the exact spot where Babu was sheltering, under the walnut-tree just outside Jiroong's house.

"As for me, it makes no difference if I strip off all my clothes and dance naked in public; my genitalia are completely innocuous. There is no effect if people laugh at a woman's private parts."

This is the origin of marriage among the Lepchas:

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Itpumu was the creator of all things, of human beings and natural objects, even of Kinchinjunga. After having many children she at last gave birth to Tarbong Bo, the youngest of all her sons. When he began to take notice and could walk about a little, he said to Itpumu one day: "Mother, are you going to travel about the world, or do you intend always to stay here?" She replied: "No, I shall never leave this place; and you, too, must never leave me." But Tarbong was very anxious to see the world, and at last persuaded his mother to let him go. She prepared some rice, put it in a bag, and sorrowfully let him go. He set off over the slopes of Konchen, after which he came to a place called Paki Chu. ⁵³⁹ ⁷⁷³

From Paki Chu he descended to Palyung Chu, which is a plateau a little above Sakyong, in the Talung Valley. As he sat on Palyung Chu he saw below him many beautiful fruit trees, and many kinds of birds which were busily eating the fruit. As he sat watching the scene he ate the rice his mother had given him. He thought he had seen enough for the time being and hurried home to his mother. Arrived there he climbed at once on to her lap and searched for her breasts. While she was suckling him she asked him what he had seen: "Oh, Mother! I have been to Palyung Chu, where I saw the most beautiful trees, and many birds eating the fruit." To this Itpumu replied: "Now, my son, if you are indeed a real man you must get hold of *Tong Ming Tong-song* and *Komok Ki*. These are two special kinds of thread, and when

cloth, but I do not think she was really shy: this was merely 587
the attitude proper to such an occasion.

The chanting and music continued at intervals; and still [78]
no one paid any attention. A little later Ongden himself
came in and sat down on the floor at the end of the row of
the bride's attendants. His entry did not seem to be in any
way formal; but almost as soon as he was seated the bride's
Pi-bo got up and made a short speech. While this was in
progress general conversation ceased: but before it was
finished one of the Lamas cut in with what was obviously [831] ●
an obscene remark, whereupon everybody started talking
again.

Nothing further happened until 4.30, when the ceremony
of killing the bullock (as already described) was performed.
By this time we were feeling so battered that a short rest
was imperative if we were to take an intelligent interest in
the evening's proceedings.

We returned at 7.30. Both the kitchen and altar-rooms
were now completely filled with people and the smoke was
so dense that one could only with difficulty see across the
room. Most of those present were now in a semi-maudlin
state; but quite a few had already passed out and lay snoring
peacefully on the floor. Conversation was being carried on [521]
in a subdued undertone: even when under the influence of
drink these people never seem to raise their voices, and still
talk quietly and without losing their tempers. As we arrived
Chotembu's wife was doing her drunken best to sing, at the
same time dancing slowly round the room so far as the
crowd permitted. At one time she came and stood in front
of us and improvised a verse or two. We could not induce
anyone to translate; but I gather the purport was obscene,
since it caused much laughter. In the kitchen room a meal
was being prepared and would later be served to all the
guests. Several people were fast asleep on the floor among
the bullock's intestines and bloody head, a grotesque sight
in the flickering half-light of the smoky fire.

There were no further ceremonies and we left at midnight,

While the feasting was going on outside the monastery⁷⁹⁶ the actual service was carried on in the main room of the building. To us it appeared to be little more than indiscriminate banging of drums and cymbals; but actually the whole order of service is described in detail in a Tibetan^[771] book, the instructions in which are carefully followed. From time to time some of the Lamas came out and joined in the general fun and games, but none of the revellers appeared to enter the monastery except to keep the monks' bowls filled with *chi*.

By midday most of the people were more or less tight. I⁷⁹⁶ saw a boy of about sixteen attempting to feel the breasts of⁵²² Tafoor's wife, much to the amusement of the onlookers and⁸³¹ the woman herself. She freed herself from his attempted embraces, uncovered one of her breasts and squeezed some milk out of it into her hand. She then ran after the boy and tried to rub the milk on his face. At this there was general laughter; and although a number of old people were present they took no notice; nor was conversation restrained in their presence. Later on in the evening this same boy made some personal remarks about Tafoor's wife again, whereupon she again bared her breast and tried to squeeze some milk into his hat; but he was too quick for her and darted away. There was a great deal of this sort of play, and Dhawa and Sukra Sing said that the conversation was almost exclusively devoted to sex. As Christians they naturally disapproved of this conduct; but even Palden, who is no Puritan and who has lived in a Lepcha village for years, says that this sort of thing never happens in villages in other parts of Sikkim, where women are not even allowed to enter the monastery compound. He was quite genuinely shocked; not so much^[781] at the sexual freedom, but at the lack of reverence shown at what is, after all, a religious festival.

A great deal of mess has been made in the monastery⁷⁹⁶ garden and it appears to be nobody's duty to clear it up. The place looks like Hampstead Heath after August Bank^[358] Holiday, and there is a smell of stale beer about the place.

This image is placed upon a base, formed by covering a bamboo stretcher with earth and braken and superimposing upon it squares of turf, each smaller than the other, with the grass facing down. The nine-storied *deu* is planted into the topmost turf immediately behind the figure. On the lower steps of the base, a great number of cones made of dough and covered with pieces of coloured cotton is placed. These cones, called *diget*, represent the servants of the *mamoo*. On the four corners of the second layer, four *yeu* are planted: in front in the right-hand corner blue, on the left white, in the rear left yellow and in the rear right red. In the topmost layer as well as into the second one, several flat wooden sticks, called *Tamsing* by the Lepchas, and small sticks bearing tufts of wool—termed *pong* or *bamgyal*—are planted. On the lowest step, a wall called *po ryum*, with a gap in front, is erected around the last turf square. Opposite this gap, inside the enclosure, four small vessels containing milk, tea and strained Lepcha beer are placed. On the right and left outside of the wall, crossed arrows and spindles are stuck into the base, the arrows being put on the right, the spindles on the left, when facing the structure. According to the explanation given by the priests, the arrows represent the male element, while the spindles stand for the female. Finally, various flowers are put around the lowest base. [83]

The ceremony is continued by offering food and various objects to the *mamoo* and other spirits and then by chanting of prayers. Towards the evening, when the ceremony comes to an end, the *deu* with the dough images is carried across three streams and then thrown away. If the images are eaten by animals within three days, it is regarded as a sign that the gods were pleased with the offerings made to them; if the effigies remain untouched, bad fortune may be expected in the near future.

There are several similarities to be found between this Lepcha rite and old Tibetan religious customs and thoughts. The name of the special thread-cross, *mamoo yam deu*, is derived from Tibetan. Indeed, one of the Tibetan thread-

On the junction of 5 and 2, a plate is placed, containing an image of the invalid dressed with parts of his clothes. This effigy is surrounded by cones, representing years, and twisted pieces of dough which are waved over the invalid for exorcising the evil influence.³³ The effigy is surmounted by a *yeu* made of black, red, yellow and white thread and on both sides of the thread-cross some *lamsing* and *pong* are placed. Then various objects are laid upon each field of the magic diagram: Leaves of a tree called *gevo kanoh*, twisted pieces of dough, several triangular tormas surmounted by *yeu*—one of them in blue, the others white—a phallus-shaped cone tipped with butter,³⁴ and a bamboo holder containing water and surmounted by a flag, called *Tarchoh*. In the central square is placed a heap of bones consisting of six skulls of dogs and goats and two breastbones of sheep. After chanting prayers, burning incense and presenting offerings to the spirits, butter lamps are lit and a bow and a rope made of yak hair are brought into the room. This rope, which is called *sanong takpo* (it may be mentioned, that *Thag pa*, is the expression for rope in Tibetan) is reported to be used only in this ceremony.

Finally, a basket is taken by a friend of the family and held outside the house in front of the door. When the tray bearing the image of the invalid is incensed and the officiating priest addresses himself to the spirits telling them that they receive a substitute for the sick person, whom they should therefore release from their influence. At this moment, the invalid's father enters the room wearing a black cloth upon his shoulders and steps upon the central square of the tortoise. A stick is handed over to him, which he rests against his right big toe, while a helper pushes the heap of skulls previously placed upon this square, against his heels. Then the yak hair rope is drawn over the father's head, starting from his back, and placed against his ankles, while the tray containing the image of the sick person is lifted over his head and put into a basket, filled with leaves and grain. The father is then given a drink of water, which he spits into the basket. The contents of this are moved to

6. THE GYAPCHI KLON CEREMONY

This complicated ceremony is carried out concurrently by lamas and Mun priests in order to free a sick person from the evil influence of certain spirits, the presence of which was recognized by divination. As this rite has already been described elsewhere,³⁷ only the image used and the various thread-crosses will be described.

During this ceremony, five images are made of buck-wheat dough and placed in front of an altar-like structure. Four of the effigies, said to represent male spirits, are depicted alike, that is standing, with raised hands; some scratches in the dough indicate that they are wearing a garment. The names of these four supernatural beings are Chyong moong, Deut moong, Lho moong and Sher moong. Their respective colours, rendered in the same order, are green, red, yellow and white. The fifth image is that of Mamoo moong, a female supernatural being whom we encountered previously. Her image is black and she is portrayed with legs apart, the sexual organs greatly exaggerated. Behind each of the images, a *yeu* of the respective colour is planted, together with two *tamsing* and two sticks with tufts of wool.

Another image, used in this rite, is called the "house owner". It is surrounded by small butter discs displaying images, impressed with wooden printing blocks (the Tibetan *Zan par*). Some of these depict the supernatural beings who preside over the cycle of twelve years.³⁸ The image of the "house owner" is connected with one *yeu*, two *tamsing* and two *pong*. The thread-cross used in this case is multi-coloured.

7. RITUAL, PERFORMED BY A LAMA TO APPEASE THE FEVER DEVIL DEUT-MOONG

After reading prayers, the lama, using bamboo sticks and blue thread, constructs a thread-cross, which is called *moong-ka deu bitomu*. After placing various sorts of grain, leaves, some fried rice and bread into the *deu*, he makes

THE MOUNTAIN TRIBES OF SIKKIM

107

in Tibet also, the Mongoloids are farmers. In the regions of 197
 North-West China, in Tsing-hai and Kan-su, we found that in 174
 many Chinese, living there, the Mongoloid element was 144
 completely lacking or present in a very negligible manner.
 These people are also of a larger build; they have the long,
 high-bridged noses, the long narrow faces and in many cases
 the Mongolian fold is not to be found. One might object
 that this was due to the influence of non-Mongoloid peoples
 like the Tibetans and the Turks who repeatedly overran these
 districts and ruled over the people for long periods of time.
 We shall refer later to the Mongoloids in China. At this
 stage it can be said that in China, the pure Mongoloids came
 from the farming inhabitants in Eastern and Central China
 as we have proved in the first chapter. One cannot quote
 the Mongols as counter evidence, as they are a very mixed
 and younger culture with strong agricultural influences.

We shall not deal in a detailed manner with the customs 121
 and habits of the Lepchas at birth, betrothal, marriage, death
 and burial. There is only one more point which I should
 like to touch upon: the judging of the Lepchas through the 114
 descriptions of European authors like Gorer and C.J. Morris. 831
 The two authors describe these people as being dominated by
 a strong, a very strong, sex complex. J. H. Hutton remarks
 in his foreword to Gorer's book, "Another aspect of Lepcha
 life which is almost as striking as the absence of aggression, [152]
 is the apparent obsession of the whole community with sex.
 I was tempted to suppose that the author of this book had
 overemphasised the Lepchas' attitude to sex through an
 unconscious dramatisation, a journalistic dramatisation, if I
 may call it so, of a want of reticence on sexual matters of all
 kinds in a degree quite unfamiliar in his own society. The
 perusal, however, of Mr. Morris's book shows that I did Mr.
 Gorer an injustice. At the same time I am rather inclined
 to feel that the apparent preoccupation of the Lepchas with
 sex does not necessarily imply that the importance attached to
 it by them in their lives is proportionately theatrical. One is
 inclined to wonder whether this consciousness of sex is the [167]
 cause or the result of the Lepchas' declining population, a
 decline of which the Lepchas are acutely aware. Probably,
 if there is any such connection at all it is by now a vicious

114 circle, but either alternative seems possible."¹¹⁰ And Gorer
 831 himself writes : "The Lepchas are much occupied with sex ;
 [562] it is the subject to much of their conversation and nearly all
 their humour ; it is regarded as almost as essential as food.
 Sex is intended to be almost exclusively sensual and almost
 impersonal ; the culture makes no allowance for deep personal
 relationships passionately adhered to between sexual part-
 ners."¹¹¹

In the first place we maintain that the sex instinct, the
 instinct that prompts a man to propagate his own kind, is a
 very strong one, natural to all peoples, and the Rong are no
 exceptions. It cannot be said of them that they are passionate
 in an extreme manner. The relationship that exists between
 [562] male and female among all Asiatic peoples is different from
 that which prevails among the Europeans. The same is
 true of man and wife within the bond of marriage. The
 Lepchas are in no way alien to the general Asiatic picture.
 The method Gorer adopts to demonstrate his theory is wrong.
 He puts together the love affairs of a few individual Lepchas
 and with one unwarranted generalization he regards it as
 the average sexual standard of all Lepchas. Anyone could
 draw a similar picture of every nationality in the world if one
 would collect the "Chronique scandaleuse" of separate
 individuals and present it under the title "Sex Life of the
 Nation."^{111a}

281 Gorer moreover states that the Lepchas believe or pretend
 831 to believe that puberty of girls, the development of breasts
 114 and menstruation occur only through sexual relationship
 562 with a man or a supernatural creature, the Kandu Mung, who
 is supposed to appear to the girl in order to make her sexually
 mature. This, of course, would very rarely occur. Most
 girls about nine or ten years of age would have to be raped.
 It would appear that the men invented this story to make
 the women dependent on them, particularly if the female
 desired puberty to come on. This belief of Gorer however
 we could not ascertain in the very places where Gorer carried
 out his research. All the same we were able to check on it

¹¹⁰. op. cit. p. 27.

¹¹¹. op. cit. p. 332.

^{111a}. G. S. Ghurye, Sexual Behaviour of the American Female, Sociological
 Bulletin, Bombay 1934, Vol. III, No. 2, p. 168 sq.

THE MOUNTAIN TRIBES OF SIKKIM

109

in other places. The Rong women are not so simple as to be taken in by such a man-made legend. They, on the contrary, affirm that the sexual maturity of girls and the development of the secondary sex characteristics occur without sexual relationship with man. The only difference is that the breasts of the girl who had had sexual relationship with man would produce some milk. The Maharaja of Sikkim and other educated Sikkimese, who read Gorer's book, found his description to be a defamation of the Lepcha character. 831
831●
114
562
[827]

The Lepchas are the descendants of the first brother Lepcha, as reported above. They fall into three divisions, which are named after the districts in which they live. The Ilame Lepchas live in the Ilame district of Nepal; the Dandjung Lepchas on the other side of the Tista river in Sikkim; the Dam-sang Lepchas in Indian Sikkim and Bhutan. The second brother was called God-she, and is the father of the Jimdar tribe. The third was Meche, and he is the proto-parent of the Meche. Each of these three have a different language.¹¹³ 773
101
619
[197]

B. SIKKIM YAK-TAMBA

There is in Sikkim a class of people who are called Limbu by the Nepalese and Tzong-pa by the Tibetans. They call themselves Yak-tamba, Ek-tamba and Ek-tambu. Tradition has it that, after the Lepchas, they are the oldest inhabitants of the place having settled there before the Tibetans and the Nepalese came to settle in the land. They are intermixed with the Rong in a very remarkable manner. At the present time they inhabit the land to the west as far as the river Arun as we have already pointed out before. They are regarded as divisions of the Limbu and bear a very close resemblance to them. The Yak-tamba have flatter faces and more Mongoloid features than the Lepchas.

C. THE BHODJA OF SIKKIM

The Tibetans who migrated into Sikkim are called the Sikkim Bhodja. Legend links the Tibetan Je-khye-bu-

¹¹³ cfr. the report of the Rai given above concerning the first parents and their three sons; see p. 7, 38. Here we have the same content of the myth.